

service possibilities and amenities for local governments.

Water systems and their managers are often excluded from local land use decisions and regional economic development planning, including construction of public schools, that increase demand for water, wastewater and stormwater services, increase operating and capital costs, and affect the ability of water systems to assure adequate water supplies and wastewater treatment for the future. Few North Carolina local governments have effective comprehensive plans that link land use changes, development approvals, and infrastructure decisions.

Water systems—public and private—may welcome an opportunity to reduce their reporting burden to the state (and the US Environmental Protection Agency) by consolidating their drinking water, wastewater and stormwater reports into an annual or regular Water System Report. Water systems could serve their data on their websites and periodically and electronically report data to the state. Consolidated reporting could improve local, regional, and state water budgeting and improve cooperation between local, regional, and state water, wastewater, and stormwater agencies.

The Water Allocation Study team supports DWR's approach of requesting LWSPs every five years on the river basin planning schedule and enabling electronic reporting. DWR currently posts LWSPs on its website after the LWSP has been reviewed and approved. But the 2 1/2 staff at DWR who review and approve plans, in addition to their other duties, are overwhelmed. DWR could post LWSP data on its website with a caveat before it is approved, and/or DWR could encourage

systems to post the draft LWSP on their own websites. More rapid posting of LWSPs on the web may facilitate regional planning.

State policy now requires all local government water systems and large community water systems to develop and submit LWSPs to DENR for approval. DWR's small staff is not able to review and approve all the LWSPs submitted in a timely manner and also respond to droughts, floods, emergencies, and other water resource problems. NC's water resource priority should be to develop scientifically sound river basin models/budgets for the major river basins. Good data from water systems that directly withdraw or discharge 100,000 gpd or more are more important to the development of river basin models/budgets than smaller systems that use less than 100,000 gpd or that buy water services from larger systems.

Local definitions of "essential water use" vary. But the drought response legislation enacted in 2008, S.L. 2008-143, creates a standard definition of "essential water use" as G.S. 143-30(3) that will now have to be accommodated in Local Water Shortage Response Plans:

"Essential water use" means the use of water necessary for firefighting, health, and safety; water needed to sustain human and animal life; and water necessary to satisfy federal, State, and local laws for the protection of public health, safety, welfare, the environment, and natural resources; and a minimum amount of water necessary to maintain the economy of the State, region, or area.